

**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
WINDHAM, CT.
MINUTES**

February 28, 2013

The Windham Planning & Zoning Commission held its meeting on February 28, 2013 in the Meeting Room, Town Hall. Chair Paula Stahl called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Members present were Jean Chaine Ed Pelletier, Dan Lein, Michael Graf, Claire Lary and Paula Stahl. Scott Lambeck recused himself from participating on the Horizons application; and Juan Montalvo was excused. Also present were Town Planner James Finger and Zoning Enforcement Officer Matthew Vertefeuille. Chair Stahl designated Michael Graf to be a voting member this evening.

I) Approval of Minutes

a) The minutes of January 24, 2013 were approved on a motion made by Dan Lein and seconded by Ed Pelletier. The motion carried unanimously.

b) The minutes of February 14, 2013 were approved on a motion made by Dan Lein and seconded by Jean Chaine. The motion carried unanimously.

Commission Ed Pelletier moved that the February 2, 2013 minutes of the Horizons Site Walk be added to the agenda and Dan Lein seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

c) The February 2, 2013 minutes of the Horizons Site Walk were approved on a motion made by Ed Pelletier and seconded by Jean Chaine. Voting in favor of the motion were Ed Pelletier, Jean Chaine, Michael Graff, Claire Lary, and Paula Stahl. Dan Lein abstained. The motion carried.

(Scott Lambeck left the room)

II) Public Hearing – Horizons, Inc. for property located at **103, 107, 127 and 153 Babcock Hill Road, South Windham** – seeking a Special Permit for improvements to the existing camp facility for people with developmental disabilities with a master plan for proposed improvements to current operations, and proposed expansion of the perimeter to include **103, 107 & 153 Babcock Hill Road, South Windham** as part of the Campground facility.

Chair Stahl explained the process for this application; the applicant will make a presentation to the Commission and members in the audience. This will be followed by questions and comments from Commission members. The hearing will then be open for audience comments, and if we have sufficient information, and everyone has had the opportunity to speak regarding the application the public hearing will be closed. The Commission will then deliberate, as a commission, on the plan.

ZEO Matt Vertefeuille advised that the public hearing was advertised in the newspaper and abutting neighbors were notified by certified mail.

Chris McNaboe, Executive Director of Horizons, outlined the services that Horizons provides to individuals with developmental disabilities. It brings campers out to their camp eight weeks each summer. It also provides weekday supportive programs for students and adults, and offers off-campus programs. She then introduced several students who attend programs at Horizons.

1) Emily Angela, who communicates via sign language, and has typed her presentation on her echo talker (computer), said she has been using the services provided by Horizons since May, 2011. She has learned many new office procedures and without Horizons she would not have been able to experience being in the work force. She said she is happy that so many people know sign language since that is her major form of communication. She went on to say that she was able to participate in the new employment education center. She said Senator Don Williams and State Representative Susan Johnson were available for the event. She said she recently went to Hartford, CT to present testimony to advocate against budget cuts. She spoke to law makers using her communication device, and was happy to see that everyone took what she had to say seriously. That is an opportunity I would not have had had it not been for Horizons. She added she is very happy with what she has achieved since being at Horizons.

2) Mario Perez said he lives at Art Space located in Willimantic. He said he loves coming to Camp Horizons in the summer and has benefited from its support services. He said he has made a lot of new friends and loves coming to the dances and making arts and crafts. He said he does his own grocery shopping and cooking. He said because he is going to the gym and walking on the track he doesn't have to take as many medications as he did before. He said being at Horizons has allowed him to experience many social activities.

3) Matthew Ricardo, accompanied by his mother, Wanda, said he likes Camp Horizons a lot. He said he has made new friends at Horizons. He said the dining hall is too small and too crowded. (Part of the master plan is to demolish the present dining area and replace it with a larger common dining area). He said he has difficulty moving around as he is in a wheelchair and a larger dining area would make it a lot easier for him to maneuver around. Wanda Ricardo (Matthew's mother) said Matthew has been at Horizons for approximately one year and she is grateful for Horizons because it has given her respite time. She said as good as it is to have quality time together; it is good to have time apart also. Horizons gives Matthew a chance to be independent and he enjoys it. The two weeks he goes to camp is wonderful. Horizons has been great, she added.

4) Loreen Palmer, a Special Education teacher at Windham High School works with children with multiple disabilities and children in the autism spectrum. She said she has worked with the Horizons staff over the last 12-15 years transitioning students from the high school program into the community. Horizons has provided wonderful job coaching opportunities for our kids as they transition into the community. They have also developed a program for young people with multiple disabilities. She said it has been hard for families to find appropriate placements for their children after school when the town is no longer providing services for them. There are very few agencies in the region that provide this kind of service for children with multiple disabilities. Horizons has risen to that occasion. They not only provide a program in a great environmental location with wonderful staff, but they provide programs that are tailored to each individual child. She said there are other facilities where we place our students that provide a good program in a large setting, but it tends to be more that the child needs to fit into the program, rather than the program being developed for the child. At Horizons, the children can reach their highest potential because the program is created specifically for them. They get a lot of one-to-one attention. They are out in the community more. They are working more. They have job opportunities in local businesses. They are working at various businesses in the community and the businesses are benefiting from the work our kids are able to do as a result of their training at Camp Horizons. Horizons provides a lot of job opportunities in the area. I have written a lot of recommendations for regular educational high school students who want to apply to Horizons for summer employment (for their program Weekends in the Country). A lot of these kids have gone on to pursue careers working with people with special needs, she concluded.

Ms. McNaboe said this is a little of what we do, and now it might be best to show what we want to do with our Master Plan. She said she would be happy to answer any questions that might come up in order to add more clarity to what they propose to do. She then turned over the presentation to Joseph Boucher, PE with Towne Engineering.

Mr. Boucher reviewed Horizons' history. He said Camp Horizons was founded in 1975 and at that time it was called Crossroads. In 1979 the name was changed to Camp Horizons and in 1985 they bought property known as 127 Babcock Hill Road. This property was used as a camp (Camp Marydell) going back to 1937. In 1960 it became Camp Kendall and in 1985 Camp Horizons took it over. He then referred to the map and pointed out the property currently owned by Horizons at Babcock Hill Road.

He said over the years there have been Special Permits issued. In 1997 a Special Permit was issued for a five-year Master Plan for all the properties on Babcock Hill Road. He then pointed out the address on the plan. 127 Babcock Hill is the original camp site. 153 Babcock Hill was purchased by Horizons in 2005; 103& 107 Babcock Hill is property that was purchased in 2006. Over the years there have been a number of Special Permits. Mr. Boucher said 1996 was the first time he was before the commission for the camp. It was for a Special Permit for the first new building on the camp. In 1997 we came back and received a Special Permit for a 5-year master plan for all the properties on 127 Babcock Hill Road. In 2004, a Special Permit added 153 Babcock Hill Road to their holdings and allowed for some parking to the rear of the property (where the pool used to be). In 2006, the Camp renewed the Master Plan for (unfinished items) 127 & 153 Babcock Hill Road. We are here before you tonight with a new Special Permit application for a new five-year Master Plan.

ZEO Matt Vertefeuille said after the site walk Mr. Boucher made a slight revision to the site plan because a request was made at the site walk to show the trails on the property.

Mr. Boucher pointed out the trails on the property, adding that none of the trails are public trails. He said two buildings will be built right away. They plan to demolish cabins 1, 2 & 3 and reconstruct a new cabin 2. Also, combine cabin 1 & 3 (which is currently used as program space) into one Pavilion-style program space adjacent to the pool. Cabin 2 will be rebuilt closer to cabin 4, farther into the camp property as well. Mr. Boucher said in addition to these two changes a third change is to add a new program structure adjacent just southerly at the end of the gym. The fourth change is to demolish the existing dining hall facility and replace it with a larger dining hall called "The Commons". The new dining hall facility will be located in the center part of the camp. The new dining hall will afford us the floor space needed to keep pace with the needs of our clients using walkers and wheelchairs. Mr. Boucher said they also plan to replace the existing sign, to move the driveway north almost to the property line, and to move the parking away from the street. He said we are also looking to make upgrades to the septic systems as needed. We are currently working through the permitting processes of DEEP, he said. There are presently no septic problems on the site, but a couple of the systems are at capacity. He said they will continue to work with DEEP and to upgrade the systems as needed.

Mr. Boucher said this is the five-year Master Plan in a nutshell; construct 4 new buildings and remove 4 buildings. The total site is 41.9 acres. He said we are currently at 4.2% lot coverage, and with all the proposed renovations we will increase that to 4.7% lot coverage. He said we will be demolishing 8,000 square feet of buildings and adding 16,000 square feet of new buildings including the covered patio outside the new dining hall. He said we are here this evening seeking approval of our five-year Master Plan, after-which we will return with a detailed site plan. He said he would be happy to answer any questions.

A general discussion ensued.

Chair Paula Stahl questioned the parking configuration. ZEO Matt Vertefeuille said most of the parking that you see in that drawing exists already. It is just a little different configuration. Mr. Boucher said there is a small parking lot in the back and they have more parking in the center aisle than there used to be. Ms. McNaboe said we plan to remove several parking spaces near the entrance and add evergreens to provide visual seclusion for passers-by.

Chair Stahl asked what the square footage is for the new dining hall. The square footage of the dining hall is 8,249 square feet and the porch area is 3,000 square feet. The new dining hall will have a capacity for 300, said Ms. McNaboe. Chair Stahl questioned how the camp has grown in terms of usage. Ms. McNaboe said the maximum that we could have is 150 campers, but the average is between 142 – 147 campers. Chair Stahl said the Town Planner gave us copies of the old minutes, and in 1995 it is stated that there were 110 campers and the next time it says that there was no growth. ZEO Matt Vertefeuille said he discussed this with the Town Attorney. We talked about enhancement of a building, versus expansion. He said the board can regulate expansion, but it cannot regulate enhancement. We cannot allow a business to go into a building and say that you cannot grow it. Horizons has the right to grow their business, and you cannot regulate the number of campers that can go into the camp.

Commissioner Dan Lein said it appears that they are not talking about expansion; they are talking about enhancement. ZEO Vertefeuille said expansion would be an expansion of the use, buildings etc. Enhancement means you are growing your business within the existing business and that is something that you cannot regulate.

So, in this case, we are talking about enhancement, is that correct, asked Lein? ZEO Vertefeuille agreed that to be correct. We are also talking about the expansion of the building, expansion of the property; we are not talking about the expansion of the use. This proposal is going to increase the footprint to include the Spector property. Chair Stahl said neighbors are concerned at what point will Horizons stop expanding. She said while she understands Horizons need to make improvements, she said she also recognized the neighbor's concerns with the number of additional people. Is there a way to impose limitations, she asked.

Commissioner Jean Chaine said that is precisely the issue that keeps cropping up. If they are going to make enhancements to the buildings that are designed to house campers, then the number of campers increases. At that point you will be making the buildings larger in order to accommodate more people, he said.

ZEO Vertefeuille said their plan shows the expansion (taking down three buildings and adding four buildings). He said they are not going to sleep anyone in the dining hall. The other buildings have stated uses, so they can't, by the nature of the Special Permit, all of a sudden take the gym or the horse stable and turn it into bunk houses. Those uses are stated on those buildings, he said. The American Disabilities Act, along with codes, talks about how big sleeping quarters have to be and they are reaching their maximum. He said by accepting a permit like this, you are not allowing them to add more people to sleep. You couldn't because there is not enough space there, he added.

ZEO Vertefeuille said you could, as a condition of the Special Permit, condition that they don't change any of the uses of the buildings without coming back for a Special Permit. Commissioner Chaine we would have to define the uses of the buildings on this 5-year plan.

Chair Stahl said she would like to proceed with the plan and hear from the applicant, ask the applicant some questions, hear from the audience and then we can deliberate and ask questions of the applicant.

Chris McNaboe said when they purchased the property in 1985 there were 300 campers living on the camp and about 60-75 staff members. So there were approximately 375 people occupying the camp. Chair Stahl asked how long camp is in the summer. Ms. McNaboe said we offer camp for eight (8) weeks in the summer. Chair Stahl asked about weekends. Ms. McNaboe said we have 16 weekends.

Chair Stahl questioned the types of programs and activities. Ms McNaboe said we provide year-round programs to assist working and non-working adults, as well as students transitioning out of high school. She then went on and reviewed the programs offered and the number of people participating, but that number varies, she added. She said some days there might be 12 coming for the work programs and some days there might be 16. So, there could be 20 to 30 people, said Stahl. We also sponsor some "Week-ends in the Country", said McNaboe. Chair Stahl asked how many people attend. Ms. McNaboe said the average is 45 and the maximum is 52. She added that staff members are available for all functions.

Chair Stahl asked, when there are campers there, are there the same number of staff? Ms. McNaboe said yes. Chair Stahl asked how the people arrive at Horizons. Ms. McNaboe said they can take Dial-a-Ride and others are dropped off by their parents. Chair Stahl said activities would begin on Friday afternoon and go through Sunday afternoon? Ms. McNaboe said yes.

Commissioner Jean Chaine asked if 103 is part of the campground. Ms. McNaboe said 103 is a vacant lot and it is a separate lot. ZEO Vertefeuille explained technically it is part of the campground property, but it is not part of the Special Permit.

Commissioner Dan Lein said Horizons' activities have had a definite impact on the area in terms of noise, traffic, etc. Do you perceive that this new plan will further impact the surrounding area, he asked. Ms. McNaboe said from time to time we have heard from the neighbors regarding noise etc. Every time we have made an improvement, we have tried to address neighbor's complaints. We have made circular driveways so there is no more backing up of vehicles. There are no more back-up noise on any of our vehicles. We have widened the area so that we can get all vehicles in at the same time that they are arriving so they are not backing up onto the street, and we have staff in place to direct those vehicles to ensure that they are going to follow these procedures. We have owned the property since 2006. We haven't changed what we are doing; we are doing a little more of it. We are not looking to expand and build more cabins. We are not planning to get the camp bigger or have it be anywhere the size that Camp Kendall was. It doesn't work for people with special needs to have a program that big. We are not changing our mission or our vision, said McNaboe.

Chair Stahl asked if there are any plans in the five-year plan, or perhaps a ten-year plan to help with some of the circulation. She said it bothered her that cars and pedestrians come in and there aren't any sidewalks or walking paths. People walk on the streets she said, and that concerned her.

Mr. Boucher said for the most part the camp activities are separated from the vehicles. ZEO Vertefeuille said when you get to see the design of the new dining hall you will get to see that deliveries, and

dumpster vehicles, will come in on one side of the building and the campers will come in on the other side of the building.

Commissioner Jean Chaine asked what happened to the former lodge building. As I recall the weekenders were in the lodge at one point, is that correct, he asked? Ms. McNaboe said, yes, that was in the early days. And, where are they now, asked Mr. Chaine? Ms. McNaboe said they are in the Crossroads Building. How many beds are in the Crossroads building, asked Chaine? Ms. McNaboe said approximately 32 beds. She explained that the lodge building was no longer suitable for folks that needed handicap accessibility. Commissioner Chaine said Crossroads was where your cabin 10 was at one time. She said cabin 10 & 11. That is what I was looking at when I said cabins were being demolished, and all of a sudden you can have more bed space. Crossroads has how many bed spaces, he asked. Ms McNaboe said approximately 32. He said he wouldn't have thought there were that many. Ms. McNaboe said that is 10 & 11. And, you have to remember we are talking about bunk beds, she said.

Commissioner Chaine said the major buildings on the facility are the Education Building, Crossroads, and the gym. Commissioner Claire Lary asked which buildings are used year-round. Ms. McNaboe said during the day we use the program center, and the dining hall. Commissioner Chaine asked, during the summer season when you have campers, do you take in any day-only people. Ms. McNaboe said we may have less than 6 day only people and they are all students that we support through the school program. Last year there were none, and the year before maybe one or two, said McNaboe.

Commissioner Claire Lary asked what buildings are used year-round. Ms McNaboe said the program center and the dining hall. Commissioner Dan Lein asked is this it for maximum growth? Ms. McNaboe said we are at the max.

Commissioner Michael Graff asked about staffing. Ms. McNaboe said they have 168 staff on a year-round basis. In the summer, we have additional seasonal staff that works in the camp programs. Approximately 140-150 seasonal staff lives there in the cabins with the campers and run the program.

Audience Comments:

- 1) **John Walker**, who is an immediate property owner abutting Camp Horizons, spoke in favor of the proposal. He said they are great neighbors. They haven't disrupted my life one bit in 30 years. He recommended that the Commission approve the 5-year plan.
- 2) **Joseph DeMarchi**, 178 Babcock Hill Road, asked about taxes. They are taking some of the tax burden off the tax rolls. He said he is also concerned about a couple of the houses that are not taxed.
- 3) **Nessa Kanter-Church**, said she lives at 120 Babcock Hill Road and has for a long time. She said the quality of life on the street has changed dramatically since Camp Horizons started operating year-round. Camp Kendall was no paradise, but they operated only 2 months out of the year. We didn't have screaming and yelling and amplified music systems and traffic to the extent that we now have. The traffic on the street has increased. You are taking your life in your hands when walking on Babcock Hill in the morning when work starts and in the evening when they go home. I think the goals and mission of the camp is laudable, but if they have all these programs off site and that operates fine why do we have to suffer for the programs that operate on site. She said she is not sure how many people work there, but between 8:30 and 9:00AM you can't walk your dog on the road because of the traffic and the speeding. Wrappers from McDonalds etc are dropped on my driveway everyday and I have to pick them up and this is from someone who works at the camp. There is a lot of walking on the street and it is not a safe road for them to walk on. She said 103 is a vernal wetlands. It is wet in the springtime, and I don't think anything should be done to it, she said. It is an empty lot right now, but there is parking in

the back of it which they have increased. I guess that is staff parking. We need to protect our wetlands. She said she is concerned about the sewage and leach fields. Chris said they are operating at their maximum and they haven't had a problem. And, my question is yet they haven't had a problem. What will this do to Big Pond? Big pond is a big concern because that is a treasure. She said I laude their mission, but I deplore their methods. There has to be a way to control the traffic and noise when campers arrive, the public address system that blares music and cheering etc. It is not a quiet peaceful neighborhood anymore. She said her porch gets filthy from the exhaust fumes and the truck traffic. She said she would like to see stop signs on Babcock Hill Road. She said the value of her property has gone down because of the neighborhood. The assessed value has increased, but the market value has decreased because I am across the street from Camp Horizons. That's not fair! The tax burden that they remove from the town coffers is being adsorbed by people like me. That is not fair! It is not clear to me how many workers come up and down the road. I have heard 15, I have heard 150. Does that mean that sometimes there are 300 employees there? 150 cars coming up the road everyday is a lot of people. It is too much. I hope they are not going to do anymore to that vernal wetland. I am extremely concerned about that.

4) **Dorothy Church**, 120 Babcock Hill Road, said besides the traffic, speeding, dirt, excessive deliveries, trucks up and down the street all day, the noise pollution in the summertime has gotten to the point where I cannot enjoy my property. I cannot sit outside and relax because of the loud music, and screaming on the in-take weekends. She said she cannot walk her dog because it is unsafe. Her property value has gone down because she is across the street from Camp Horizons.

5) **Jack Kornacki**, 171 Babcock Hill, South Windham said he is here to express his concerns regarding Camp Horizons' Special Permit request for improvements to the existing camp facility and their 5-Year Master Plan for proposed improvements to current operations, and proposed expansion of the perimeter to include 103, 107, & 153 Babcock Hill Road as part of the Campground facility. He read his letter in its entirety expressing his concerns with the proposed plan into the record. He said he is not opposed to Camp Horizons' mission to serve special needs persons, nor the necessary permitted improvements, renovations or expansion of activities or infrastructure consistent with its mission provided it is confined to the original 27.7 acre parcel. Camp Horizons is a permitted use entity, that although out of concert with the residential character of its neighborhood, it is a part of that neighborhood and provides for special needs persons. Continuing, upgrading and renovating special needs programs and infrastructure under the Special Permit process on the original 27.7 acre parcel is acceptable; however its potential to adversely affect the character of the neighborhood, property values and community tax burden by perimeter expansion cannot be denied. Camp Horizons may have changed over years in a manner that may have allowed some changes, it slipped under the radar in some instances. He said he proposes for the Commission's consideration, that this and subsequent permit requests for expansion of programs, activities or infrastructure be conditioned on confinement to special needs requirements and limited to the original 27.7 acres or likewise limited by some other regulatory process.

6) **Mary Sheehan** said she lives on Babcock Hill Road across from Horizons. She said she is not against people with developmental disabilities or Horizons and what they do. Horizons has grown too large for our quiet residential neighborhood. Camp Horizons started as a summer camp. Now the camp is gone and Horizons is a year-round facility. Horizons wants to expand the perimeter of the camp beyond the original 27.7 acres. Each new expansion and improvement and renovation allows for the possibility of more year-round activities. She listed her concerns including noise and lower property values. Since Horizons is a smoke-free facility, employees are told to walk to the gas station/convenience store on Route 32 to smoke. They walk up and down Babcock Hill Road smoking and talking on their cell hones. After working nights at Windham Hospital I am often awakened by noise coming from Horizons. If Horizons is allowed to expand and improve unabated, then this Commission is not fulfilling one of their stated goals to improve and maintain the quality of life in Windham and to preserve the urban and rural qualities of life in the Town of Windham.

7) **John Dobrolet**, 130 Babcock Hill Road, said that Horizons has forever changed the character of the neighborhood. Horizons replaces structures with new buildings two or three times the original size. By doing so, that invites more employees, more clients, more volunteers, more events, more contractors, more deliveries, more traffic, and more noise. The list goes on and on, he said. My wife works third shift at Windham Hospital, and with all the activity at Horizons, she finds it difficult to sleep. Horizons is a 24-7 operation. It is a beehive of activity. It is like living next to a college campus. I think it is high time for Horizons to start looking at opening up satellite campuses. There is plenty of open space in Lebanon, Scotland, and Mansfield. The approvals that the Zoning Commission gave Horizons in the past wasn't necessarily the right thing to do. The Zoning Commission is charged to help preserve and enhance the quality of life and the property value of my home. If this Zoning Commission approves any expansion, or enhancement at anytime, you will be doing a disservice and an injustice not only to every taxpayer in that neighborhood, but to the Town of Windham as well.

8) **Beth Morris** said she has been a 20-year employee with Horizons. During that time my hours have varied between 30 – 50 hours a week. A small fraction of those hours are actually spent at Babcock Hill Road. I can say that for a vast number of employees, we do not go to Babcock Hill Road. But, for those of us who do, we have certainly been warned that this is a residential neighborhood, and we have to drive very slowly. When I get to the bottom of Babcock Hill Road I set my speedometer at 30 miles per hour and I have had neighborhood cars fly by me. So, it is not just our staff that is the issue. While Horizons may not pay taxes they pay me a salary, and I own a home in Windham, and I pay taxes in Windham.

ZEO Vertefeuille read two letters into the record.

A) **Mrs. Sally Klitz** expressed concern over the uncontrolled growth over this now huge operation. She also expressed concern with decreased property values and excessive noise. The noise from this “camp” has become so intolerable to me that I no longer can enjoy my deck in the summer. I can't entertain outside and now have to keep my windows closed. She enclosed a copy of the Town of Windham Noise Ordinance. She said our rights to a peaceful environment are continuously violated and the Town does nothing about it. The law is being broken, she said. Improvements to any property are fine, but these improvements often seem to lead to additional larger buildings, closer and more visible to the abutting neighbors. We are looking to you, Planning & Zoning Commissioners members, to protect our rights.

B) Letter from **Robert Apt** expressing his concerns. Horizons has gotten too big for this area and is expanding into the residential neighborhood. This means that acquired properties are taken off the tax rolls and off Windham's Grand List. I feel that this is totally wrong as Horizons, itself, is more of a company business than a so-called non-profit group. They should pay taxes on its initial area especially when they take over former tax-paying properties for their staff and counselors. I suggest that they purchase the former Norwich State Hospital grounds and buildings where there is plenty of space for their special needs programs. The Planning & Zoning Commission should never have allowed the Horizons development to the extent that it is now. Also, one sees the increased traffic on Babcock Hill Road and associated safety and pollution concerns that this brings. No further expansion should be allowed and only upgrades to septic systems and current facilities should be done.

9) **Mrs. John Walker** said she has always been concerned with walking on Babcock Hill Road. She said in her experience she hasn't seen a huge increase in traffic. There have always been cars going up and down, but it is an unsafe road. Perhaps other things need to be put in place for the public's safety such as speed bumps, extra stop signs or other signage to slow people down.

10) **Mr. Therieault**, 26 Eastview Terrace, said his concerns are not with the original parcel. I think the enhancement of that property is going to be fine, not a problem. But, I am worried about the expansion

with the 107, 103, and 153 properties. They have said they are not interested in getting larger, but they have showed interest in buying other properties. They have shown interest in buying property on Eastview Terrace and the property on the other side of 103. Those are my concerns. He said I think 127 is fine. I can say that the noise doesn't bother me at all.

12) **Darcy Church** said she spoke to the Town of Windham about the road. She asked about putting up speed bumps, stop signs and they said that no modifications would be allowed ever.

Chair Stahl asked Commission members if there were any questions for the applicant.

A general discussion ensued.

Commissioner Dan Lein referred to the Special Permit. ZEO Matt Vertefeuille said it is a Special Permit because it is an expansion of the original Special Permit. Commissioner Lein said if you get the concept of a Special Permit, it sounds like it is special and it can't happen again. Before it existed, it had to come to the Zoning Commission at some point to become special, because it wasn't allowed under the town's current regulations. Once a prior Commission approves this, it no longer becomes special, it becomes permitted. Chair Stahl said the use has been permitted by a previous Zoning Commission.

Commissioner Jean Chaine said the non-conforming issue is what the previous zoning Commission felt this fell under. They said it publicly and that triggered the need for the Special Permit. They moved by approving it based on the assumption that they were able to control the expansion that everybody was concerned about. The then, non-conforming statute was allowed, but limited to only a certain percentage of growth over a period of five years. To clarify why we are doing Special Permits, of which Commissioner Lein was asking about, those Special Permits began and were triggered under that era, they thought it was non-conforming. But, they still need Special Permits because they are doing something different to the proposal that existed in 1996 and 1997.

ZEO Matt Vertefeuille referred to Section 21.2.9c1 which talks about the expansion of a campground; an existing campground may continue to operate, but changes to the property shall be reviewed in accordance with these regulations, and/or the provisions of a non-conforming property under Section 3.10, as a principle for minor modifications, or Section 62 for substantial changes by Special Permit. That is what triggered the Special Permit, said Vertefeuille.

Commissioners asked the applicant if they had any comments regarding traffic and noise. Ms. McNaboe said in the new design of the building, of the new dining hall, we have addressed noise that may emanate from that building, and I am not sure if that is what anyone is talking about. All the improvements will make a much more insulated building that is actually a little farther into the campus, farther away from the property line, and abutters, and have more insulated factors so that any noise will be reduced. She added that increasing the footprint of the kitchen will also reduce the number of deliveries. Currently we have about 3-4 deliveries a week of food items, and we will be able to cut that at least in half because we will have more capacity for storage. In the past, when I have been made aware of concerns that neighbors had about early morning noises, we have never allowed our dumpsters to be emptied before 8:30 AM. We have never allowed deliveries to happen before 8:00 AM. We don't allow noise to happen on the camp that would be excessive noise from outside structures while we are building. We have widened driveways to allow for the construction vehicles to off-load their heavy equipment in the campus proper. That is another consideration we have done in this round for the Master Plan. We have also situated the dumpsters in a place that is a little more remote from where they are right now so that even the noise from emptying a dumpster maybe lessened. But, that activity usually happens around 11:00 AM. I have tried to be as responsive as possible for those folks that have come and complained, and I have been as courteous to them as I have been tonight to you, she said.

Perhaps other people might have said things that didn't appear to be courteous, but I have never been discourteous to our neighbors, and I actually invite them to come and see what we are doing and to take part in any activities and to give me feedback. The musical concerts that people have mentioned tonight happen from 2:00PM to 4:30PM, and on occasion they are outside. We try to keep it to that time frame so that we are not disturbing anyone's sleep. We are sensitive to that, and that happens in the interior portion of the property where the field is, or in the gymnasium depending on the weather. She added that with this new building project we are not expanding our services. We are not taking additional campers. We are not going to expand the numbers of people that we are going to have in the summer camp program. It is to make the environment more friendly. There are no beds associated with this that will be increasing. The structures will be better insulated and moved farther into campus. The program structures that are now a little bit closer to the program center are going deeper into the property line farther away from our neighbors which was part of the reason we wanted to acquire the 107 property. It was all called 107, and we divided it up to 103, 107. The green parcel on the plan, we wanted to preserve for perhaps future horse grazing or something of that nature. We didn't have any intention to build any additional properties or have any buildings on that. We wanted to preserve the rural nature of the camp area and not build on that parcel. In response to what we give back to the community, yes, we don't pay taxes on that property. We do; however, take our role as a non-profit very seriously. We have been able to because we are non-profit, secure services and donations to repair things like Big Pond. Without the donations that we were able to get for Big Pond because we are non-profit, we could be looking at an empty area with no water in it. And, it has happened twice that the DEEP came and said that you have to breach the dam and you have to get rid of it unless you make these extensive repairs. A group of people came together to make sure that happened and Horizons was the grant that made that possible. It secured the engineer that donated over \$50,000 of services to make the improvements that we had to in order to comply with the DEEP regulations, so we are trying to give back in other ways. Also, we have at least 5 staff members that presently or recently have been volunteers on the Fire Depts. of the Windhams. Many of our staff volunteer on lots of non-profit boards and corporations in Windham in order to give back to the community. They also work with the local school systems, the PTA's, the PTO's and support local businesses. They do things to give back to the community because they feel invested in the community, she added.

Commissioner Ed Pelletier said a number of the people were concerned with noise. There are a number of trees there that can serve as a buffer, is that part of your proposal, he asked? Ms McNaboe said yes, we have planted some of those trees already and we will continue to plant. We stagger the planting so that tree size varies, and we will continue to have the plantings buffer in place. Commissioner Pelletier asked if there was a P.A. system. Ms. McNaboe said they do not have a P.A. system. We use walkie-talkies to communicate with each other. The former Camp Kendall had a P.A. system. We used to use amplified music on the 4 in-take Sundays when the campers arrive. When it was brought to my attention that the neighbors could hear that we stopped any amplification and now we are using our voices. We are giving them a hero's welcome, we are cheering them, and it is a rousing cheer. We chant their names and sometimes play bongo style drums, or acoustic drums to accompany us, but there are no radios, there is no amplified music, there is no P.A. system. There are no microphones. We are using our own voices, and that happens from 12:00 PM to 4:30PM on four Sundays of summer. We start at the gate where the campers drive in right in front of the current dining hall and it continues until they pass the arts & crafts building which is the next building down that little driveway.

Chair Stahl said you had talked about not expanding campers, how about expanding other activities there? Ms. McNaboe said we have no plan right now to expand other activities. As I said our expansion pretty much in the last several years has been focused out in the community, and not on the campus, said McNaboe. Chair Stahl asked, you only have approximately 40 health care people Monday – Friday

during the day. Do you see that increasing, asked Stahl. Ms. McNaboe said we have no plans to make that significantly larger. I think there is a plus or minus of 5 in there that could be part of it, but we are not saying we are going to take 25 more people coming in during the day. We are not big enough to do that. Chair Stahl asked, where are they going? Ms. McNaboe said they are going to the Program Center. Emily is part of our reception team and helps to greet people as they come into the door. Matthew has that role as well, and they may work in the program center as well.

Commissioner Jean Chaine said the in-take weekends have been a thorn in the sides of the neighbors. He asked how receptive would Horizons be to moving that in-take deeper into the campus. You have an access right now by the Spector property and you have the parking, what is to prevent the vehicles from going into the main gate to get their ambience of a first rate facility then drive through to the gym and do your hoopla there and then have the cars park in the parking lot. Ms. McNaboe said the hoopla part that happens is as each person arrives and then stops and starts up again as the next person arrives. There are up to 150 people between 12:00 PM and 4:30 PM. To move that part of it after they have already entered and gone to their cabins would be... Commissioner Chaine said he is not suggesting that. The demarcation point is around the gym and then do the assignments and the cabins etc. As they drive through they get welcomed and they go right to their cabins. So, if we were to move the in-take closer to the gym, they would have to drive through - down to the gym, get welcomed, and then drive back through again to go to their cabins because all the roads are one-way in the summer.

Chair Stahl suggested moving the welcome to be directly behind the program center. Ms. McNaboe said actually the welcome center piece is really only used on the visiting days when there is probably about 20 or 30 families that come to visit. Chair Stahl said you are misunderstanding what I am saying. The building that is directly behind the gate, if the noise could be centered in this area then the building itself would buffer some of that sound. You could have the hurrah directly behind the program center. Ms. McNaboe said the actual hurrah doesn't happen at the welcome center. The actual hurrah part happens in the front of the Arts & Craft building. We would certainly be willing to give that a try, to relocate where the cheering is happening. In the new design it might be more possible to stagger the staff along the front of the porch and let that be where the bulk of the cheering is happening. I can see that being very possible, she said.

Commissioner Jean Chaine asked, are there any amplified sounds on the campus. Ms. McNaboe said yes, in the gym we have a music system that we play music for our dances. There are no exterior amplifiers, he asked? Ms. McNaboe said no. The noise level that the neighbors have been talking about are emanating from humans? Yes, she said on those 4 in-take Sundays. She said the zoning official has been on the campus during the summer with full activities going on and indicated to me that he didn't hear any noise.

Commissioner Chaine said probably a lot of the noise that the neighbors are complaining about are oriented around the pool, such as laughing and screaming. Ms. McNaboe said she would be very surprised if they could hear noises at the pool during the day. It is not amplified. That is much farther into the campus and it is my understanding that people are talking about the in-take days. On alternating Sundays, we do have music playing outside, and sometimes that is amplified. But, that would be for a specific dance or a specific entertainment. It is not a regular course of events.

ZEO Vertefeuille said the complaints that he has received in the past are around the in-take days, it isn't about the occasional concert. Before they were using a horn system and we have received complaints about that. He said the complaints were around that and the in-take days.

Commissioner Jean Chaine asked if the in-take activity were altered to another location that would go a long way to reducing the neighborhood concerns. Ms. McNaboe said we could do that when we finish the construction of the new building. I could envision using the porch area where folks are greeted with the cheering and the clapping, she said. ZEO Vertefeuille said he is going to ask to see a site plan and that could be included on it. Commissioner Chaine said he is very sensitive to the neighbors and he is hoping that we can come up with some compromise that addresses some of the concerns of the neighbors. He referred to the warming hut for the wood splitting activities, is that a wood fire? Ms. McNaboe said no, there is a gas heater in it.

Commissioner Chaine said there were complaints about staffers smoking while walking down the road to the gas station. Ms. McNaboe said we have made provisions for folks that have time off and don't have a vehicle to be driven down to the Valero Gas Station where they can spend some time, and also in town. We encourage them to get off the campus and come into town and take advantage of the things that are in Windham. The smokers can't leave the property while they are on duty. They don't get smoking breaks. Anyone that has time off is offered transportation into town so they can really be off, she said. This is a relatively new policy for the last few years.

Commissioner Jean Chaine said he has to admit that he was hostile to this operation, and the more he dug into it the less negative he became. There were some things that were revealed that I think are worth pointing out. He said he never considered the value that you provide for respite care. This gave me a different feeling for the organization, but at the same time I am still sensitive to the neighbors. I would be very supportive of any language that attempts to address those concerns and come up with a compromise.

Chair Stahl said you had talked about the times that you have music, is that on Sundays? Ms. McNaboe said we don't own any amplification other than what is in the gym and a small music system inside the dining hall. Those are brought in by the entertainers. We have had entertainers come in with P.A. amplification so that means when they don't play in the gym, they may play on the field. Chair Stahl asked how often they play? Ms. McNaboe said it is usually every other Sunday, so it is one Sunday in a 2-week period. Chair Stahl said you could limit the amount of sound. You can also limit the sound as to how you aim your speakers, said Stahl. Ms. McNaboe said we do aim the speakers in towards the green parcel. We aim things out into the field out towards the pool area. And, if it is loud we ask them to turn it down. She said we can be more sensitive to that, she said.

Chair Stahl referred to the vernal pool up in the 103 area. Mr. Boucher said he has hired a soils scientist over the last 12 years to inspect this property. He said all the wetlands are marked on the plan. Chair Stahl said vernal pools are not necessary wetlands and are not picked up as wetlands. Mr. Boucher said the soils scientist was there in November of last year and again in March associated with the housing project. I will have him go back out and look at that, said Boucher.

Ms. McNaboe invited commission members to visit the site on in-take days to have a first hand experience. If we need to do that in a more official way, we could do that. She said she is open for suggestions. We want to preserve the hero's welcome that we are giving our campers because that is probably the only time of the year that someone treats them as royalty in that way, but we don't want to perpetuate any ill feelings in the neighborhood.

Mary Sheehan, a member in the audience, referred to two incidents of noise. There is someone that screams every morning and perhaps he could be moved further back so that I wouldn't hear his screams. The other noise thing is when a camper leaves the facility there is an air horn that goes off and I don't know if there is another way of dealing with that. Ms. McNaboe said the air horn is used for a missing

camper, and we consider a camper missing if he is not in our immediate sight right away. That is the only way to alert other administrators to know that we are looking for somebody, and that is when we do use an air horn. I can't think of another way to alert everyone. Commissioner Jean Chaine suggested using a survival whistle instead of the air horn. Ms. McNaboe said she would look into that.

As there were no further comments, the public hearing was closed.

Discussion on the application.

Commissioner Dan Lein said the incongruity between Horizons and the neighbors is significant, and I don't know if this Commission is capable of mitigating that. It appears that the damage has already been done. How do we go backwards in time? I do have empathy for the neighbors and I am significantly impacted by that, but I don't know what we can do to enhance the quality of their lives. I am concerned about the expansion because it is getting bigger and worse, and not smaller and better.

Commissioner Jean Chaine agreed. He said decisions were made by our predecessors who made their decisions based on the information that they had at that time. There were unintended consequences because they made assumptions that were incorrect. One of those assumptions was they were dealing with an activity that fell under a certain classification. They had some built in controls. We don't have that. We must keep from repeating the same problems by making decisions based on information that we are assuming. We can't rely on information that we are assuming to be correct. We need to make decisions based on information that we know is correct. I think we should be entertaining some proactive conditions to help spell out what our expectations are by any approvals that we put forward tonight, he said. I think the conditions that we would be leaning toward have already been partially acceptable based on the comments that have been made by the director of the camp.

Commission members agreed that some of the areas that needed to be considered were parking, noise, and in-take area.

Chair Stahl said during the hearing it was asked how many times they used amplified sounds for entertainment purposes. Ms. McNaboe said 4 times during the summer camp season. Commissioner Claire Lary had asked if there were other times that they used amplified sounds and Ms. McNaboe said no. Chair Stahl said during the hearing it was also stated that the activity was limited to eight weeks of summer camp, and sixteen overnight weekends. Chair Stahl had questioned the type of programs and activities offered at Horizons. Ms. McNaboe stated that they provide year-long programs to assist working and non-working adults as well as students transitioning out of high school. They also provided week-day supportive programs for students and adults.

Commissioner Ed Pelletier suggested using evergreen trees throughout the camp to shield parking and activity areas and to buffer noise.

It was also suggested that the architect work out a design for the porch that faces the road in order to mitigate the noise; and to limit noise at the in-take by relocating it. In addition, to use the green area shown on the map for parking, wood splitting and as a grazing area for horses. It was also suggested to off-load construction equipment on camp property and not on the road.

After some further discussion, Paula Stahl made a motion to approve the five year plan of Horizons:

- the demolishing of cabin # 1,2,3 and the dining hall;
- the construction of the new dining hall, new cabin #2, a new program pavilion and a
- future program structure, porch cover for arts and crafts, new welcome pavilion and
- gate, upgrade and expand septic and leaching systems per the submitted plans, and
- the addition of the entrance to the staff parking at 103 Babcock Hill Rd and the free
- standing Horizons sign at the main entry;
- to approve the use of the original 27.7 acre property as a camp with the following
- conditions: the activity level limited to eight weeks of overnight campers during June,
- July and August, and sixteen off-season overnight weekend camps (Friday to Sunday
- Afternoon), one vacation week camp, and the Monday through Friday daytime activity
- not increased beyond current levels;
- the use of the property depicted in green on the map presented, limited to existing
- parking, wood splitting and the grazing of horses;
- the property at 107 Babcock Hill Rd limited to the use as one single family home;
- uses of all property limited to the mission of Horizons;
- no expansion of administration space;
- the use of 153 Babcock Hill Rd be limited to one single family residence;
- the use of outdoor amplified sound limited to four times during summer camp
- season between the hours of 10am and 5pm;
- the screening of all parking areas and activities from neighboring homes to the extent
- possible with dense evergreens;
- limit the noise by relocating intake to the best suitable location, and design the dining
- hall porch and patio to minimize noise off site; and
- that construction vehicles to unload in the interior of the property.

Jean Chaine said one of the contributing elements to the problem is the intake area. If they move forward on that, that is a big factor. Let's figure what the problems are and do something about them. It is nice to see a picture. It is nice to see that they are doing something about a problem that has been brought forth.

Jean Chaine seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

II) Update on the Incentive Housing Zone – Chair Stahl said Jana Butts has e-mailed her revisions and a public hearing is set for March 28, 2013.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lillian Murray, Clerk